

**Testimony to the House Appropriations Committee
By William H. Geer**

I am William Geer, a resident of Lolo for nearly 15 years. I am a graduate of both the University of Montana School of Forestry and the Montana State University Graduate School in Botany.

My entire 34-year career in fish and wildlife management has been based on the pragmatic application of science, public policy and service to the public in delivery of fish and wildlife programs. I am very much a proponent of active management to achieve the desired future conditions that the public wants and ultimately votes for.

I am currently a Policy Initiative Manager for the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, a non-government organization focused on fish and wildlife conservation and advocating for the interests of hunters and anglers. I was formerly the Director of the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, the equivalent of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks. In that capacity, I supported many land and water restoration projects and saw the benefits to state fish and wildlife resources.

I also serve on the new Montana Forest Restoration Working Group, a collection of federal and state agency professionals and conservation organization volunteers charged with developing new ideas and approaches to practical national forest management and restoration that better represents, among other things, the will of the state and people while satisfying federal mandates.

The Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership documented in their report, *Backcountry Bounty: Hunters, Anglers and Prosperity in the American West*, the enormous economic value of hunting and fishing – totaling nearly \$70 billion annually in the US – to states and communities. If hunters and anglers were a corporation, the company would rank #11 on the Fortune 500 list. Sportsmen pay to play, and they pay more than \$1 billion every year in Montana. Montana citizens want a strong economy and a healthy environment.

A growing and vibrant restoration economy ought to bring greater economic vitality and diversity of our state and communities and add to the strength already provided by agriculture, mining, oil and gas development and timber production.

From the perspective of fish and wildlife management for the benefit of the people, restoration of lands and streams will improve and help stabilize the habitat base desired species need to thrive while we continue to enjoy the benefits of a economic development.

Montana has its own mini-Superfund to address industrial sites not covered under the federal CERCL program as well as river restoration, future fisheries improvement and Bull Trout and Cutthroat Trout Restoration Acts. HB388 improves certain restoration accounts and provides increased funding for restoration activities.

I urge the Montana Legislature to provide for overall public and ecosystem health by passing HB388 for benefit of all Montanans, both present and future.

William H. Geer
Policy Initiative Manager
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership
PO Box 16868
Missoula, MT 59808
406-396-0909
bgeer@trcp.org